[G. F. Boone]

1

FOLK STUFF-RANGELORE

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 74

Page #1

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G. F. Boone, 78, was born on his father's plantation in Grimes co., Miss., Dec. 6, 1859. In 1865 his father, feeling that the South would lose in the great conflict and his slaves be freed, decided to emigrate to Texas, where he could make a new start in a new country. After a trip full of adventure, including the swimming of the Mississippi River, he settled on some land in Milam co., Tex., which later became Coryell co., after Milam co. was divided. He educated an ex-slave to ox-team freighting, and established a route from Grayson co. to Burleson co., as well as to the Rio Grande Valley. He then began to operate a ranch. G.F. Boone first learned to ride an old carriage horse before he was five, and at six was riding a lazy mule on the ranch. At eight he was doing part of a cowboy's routine, and at 10 he could do anything but bull-dog a grown steer. He was training horses at 14, and was employed by the Young Ranch in this capacity before he was 16. His fading memory, account of age, prevents giving accurate dates. Sometime later, he and his father formed a partnership, and after his father's death he formed another partnership with his son, Tom Boone. In 1931, he retired from the ranch to deal in cattle on the Fort Worth market,

selling to the ranch in 1935, after which he retired from active life and now resides at 1920 Ashland, Fort Worth, Tex. His story:

“Yes sir, I've lived my life right on the range. The reason I say that is because you wouldn't quite say that I am really living now. I'm just an old man, sitting here in the rocking chair, not doing a thing. My memory aint what it should be, but I've kept a lot of notes and so on, on things that happened to me and my friends, that ought to help us with this story. C12-[2/11/41?] - [Tex?]

“That there bible, now, was a gift to my grandparents back in Miss., when they were married. You'll see there the date, 1807; then you'll see more dates. Some of the stuff we had on our family got lost in the Galveston flood. Our family comes from England and, as far back as we can trace, the men were all horse lovers. There's 2 [Israel?] Boone, brother of Daniel Boone, history's trail blazer, and so on. Another thing about our family, an uncle of mine, Bishop Boone, went to China 101 years ago to establish a hospital for the Episcopal Church.

“By the way, a couple of his granddaughters made us a visit in 1936, and they came about the time of the Fat Stock Show. The show is good anyway; but you can imagine how they took on, when they hadn't seen more than a small herd of milk cows before in their life, and never saw any rodeo stuff before. I enjoyed the show and them, too, that time.

“Now, back to my family. My grandfather operated a plantation in Grimes co., Miss. My dad was born on it, in 1814. I was born on that same plantation, Dec. 6, 1859. About the only memory I have of the old plantation is that of learning to ride on an old carriage horse that was too old to draw my dad's carriage.

“That was during the Civil War, and the next memory is of dad giving up the old plantation to come to Texas. You know how the old plantations were about their slave marriages. Well, some of the men were married to women on other places, and so on. Dad didn't want

to split any families up, so he told them all he was going to Texas, and all that wanted to come along could do so. Unfortunately for him, too many wanted to come.

“After a good deal of trouble, he picked out the ones he decided to let come, and gave the rest their freedom. Then, our stuff was loaded on one ox wagon. Of course, we couldn't bring everything we owned, but only the law books, medicine books, and keepsakes, with a few rations, were loaded. The other wagon was horse-drawn, with a 3 six-horse team. Horses of that day wern't the horses of today, so that wagon was turned over to the niggers.

“All that I remember mostly from the older folks' talk. I do remember us picking up an old Swedish sailor before we got to the Mississippi River. He told dad that the best way to get across the river was at night, because the Yankee gunboats were in command of the river. The reason dad gave up the plantation in the last year of the war was because the Yankees were winning the war; and he didn't want to be in Yankee territory, if he could get out of it and make a living. Another thing, the Yankees were taking everything away from the Confederate people they needed; and, in most places, when they didn't need it, they ruined it.

“Well, to get across the river without being caught. The sailor knew about a Southern boat that was hid across the river in a cave. After showing dad the location, dad swam that river, a whole mile across. He got across, then made the arrangements with the commander for that night, then got a small boat to come back in.

“When he got back, he told the niggers to take the loads off the wagons, take the wagons to pieces, and load everything near the bank. We could do this because the night got dark early, and the sailor said a storm was brewing. I remember the sailor saying that the gunboats would keep back around the bend until morning, on account of the storm. Sure enough, after the boat was loaded, and we took off, we never saw a sign of a gunboat. When the boat reached the other shore, the niggers unloaded all the stuff, and set the ox-

team wagon up first. [?] soon's it was ready to go, dad got under way, and the niggers set about fixing the horse wagon. They'd just 4 got it fixed, the team hitched to the wagon, and the nigger women loaded, when we saw a gunboat 'round the bend. Looking back at it all now, I don't believe anybody on the gunboat saw us, but they fired a shot as they rounded the bend. Dad was afraid some of the niggers might be hit, but they weren't. The driver whipped that six-horse team, and got the wagon a-going. Those horses took that wagon so fast that the nigger wasn't able to keep the wagon in the trail and the hubs just barely scraped the trees, along. We kept watching for the wagon to be torn to pieces, but it came through alright, and we all got away. I think the reason for the nigger being so good with those horses was because he was one of the men who took care of the plantation beef, and knew how to handle horses.

Well, nothing else exciting happened on the trip that I can recall right now. The next thing I recall is [???] dad putting the niggers to work, clearing land and building a couple of log houses, several sheds and a barn. They were all built with logs, because there was no pine lumber in the country. All the pine had to be hauled great distances. All that country had was Live Oak and Post Oak trees, which couldn't be used for anything but log houses, and so on.

“In fact, let me tell you a true story on a preacher by the name of Henry Boyd. He kept a little pine lumber in the loft of his house, and wouldn't sell it for any amount of money. He'd loan it to you, but he'd say: 'Hurry right back with it because I might die any minute, and I'd need that lumber for my coffin.'

“We never needed any pine, because [???] dad had the niggers put the windows and doors to the plantation house in the bottom of 5 the ox-wagon, and none of it broke, or even cracked, on that long rough trip.

“While the niggers were busy getting the logs and so on together, dad showed them what to do. He then took the horse-team driver and began educating him in establishing

a freighting business. Some of it was from the Navasota bottoms to the Rio Grande Valley, but the most of it was flour from Grayson county to Caldwell, in Burleson county. According to the old tally book, flour was $20.00 a barrel, and $10.00 a hundred.

“After three or four trips with the nigger, he was allowed to go alone. He'd have to pay for the stuff he bought; and if the money was gold pieces, he'd bore a hole in the top of one of the standards, (you know how those old U.S. Government wagons were, built to look like a boat with rounded bottoms and so on), put the pieces in it, make a plug and fill the hole up tight, then rub some dirt over it. If the money was paper, he'd cut a piece of leather about the size of the money, place the money under the wagon bed, and tack the leather down over it, then smear some grease over the place. He'd go to all this trouble, because he had to pass through some mighty rough territory where some holdup gangs were supposed to control the county. I've talked to several of those fellows who used to be holdup men in the old days, and they said that they'd have an agreement that they would stay out of each other's territory. The nigger was never bothered at any time. He did carry whatever money he needed for expenses in his pocket. If he'd ever been stopped, they'd have took this money and thought no more about it, because that's all any nigger ever carried with him in those days - just enough money for expenses. 6 “I don't recall just when, but dad registered the brand he wanted to use, in the old Milam county courthouse. It was the 'Double Horseshoe Connected' iron. You made it like this: I don't recall just now where the folks got their first cattle; but our horses, besides the ones we brought with us, were wild ones trapped in the hills. I can't tell you how they done that, because I was just a kid then.

“In fact, the only horse I'd ever rode, before we came to Texas, was the old carriage horse. The next animal I rode was an old mule that was so lazy a fellow had to lead it or ride it. I rode it ever change I got. There wasn't so much cattle tending to do, but I tried to be around any time anybody done anything with them. The niggers gradually left the place, because the folks weren't able to keep them, 'til we didn't have but one or two. One of

them was a real young nigger who could best anybody a cooking I ever ate after. He was a wizard in the kitchen.

“Mother was 40 years old before she cooked her first meal, and that nigger taught her. He was good enough that when he was around 40 to 45, he made around $125.00 a month at some college, I think it was A. and H., cheffing. It's hard to make people realize what it meant for folks to work, after living the life my mother lived. [?] life of ease, and the only thing she ever did was to study and better educate herself. That's one thing my whole family tried to do, to educate everybody in the family. The only reason I never got an education was because dad just gave up and tried to make a living handling cattle. You didn't have to have an education in the old days, to make money in cattle, because there wasn't any science in 7 it like there is today.

“Along about the time I was eight years old, I'd learned enough about riding a horse to be used around the cattle. The folks used me in their roundups, wherever a boy could be used, and I did everything a boy could do. I got better as I grew older, though, and did some riding on the [sly?]. I'd ride yearlings and colts wherever I found them, 'til I could ride one and let him pitch as he would. That was mighty good training, which I sure needed.

“I got to be good enough when I was 10 that the folks would use me everywhere. I could do anything then but bulldog and bust broncs. Even then, I rode some that were considered broncs. Almost had to, to ride a horse, because horses in those days just about pitched every time you got on one, after five or six hours rest. . That was what we called 'warming them up'.

“This business of busting the wild horses was what I was interested in. I kept on riding everything I could get away with until I rode some wild ones, about the time I was 14. I really can't set a date, or a year; just along sometime after I was 14. I think the main reason I got so good on them was because I'd always pick out the worst outlaw in the corral every time I needed a horse. That gave me some real training.

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“From the time we first came to Coryell, when there were very few men on the range, more and more cattlemen began to come in, and we got to see more cowboys. Sheep, also, began to come in.

“I don't know whether Billy Young, who had a ranch close to ours, had sheep or not when we first got to Coryell. I do know that when he hired me as a horse buster, when I was about 18, he had a few 8 head of sheep and cattle, but specialized in horses. Though he hired me as a bronc buster, I was only to bust those horses he needed for sale. The rest of the time I put in on our ranch. My wages were one horse out of three that I busted. If I got any money, I had to take and sell these horses to get it. I did sell a few, but took most of them to our ranch.

“The reason I kept so many was because Young built up the wild horse herd around his place by turning some young Steeldust and Spanish studs loose and killing off the old Mustang studs. Had to kill them off to keep them from killing the young studs that didn't have any fighting experience, but would let the old ones walk right up to them and get in the first blow.

“I don't recall all the details, or the dates, but along about this time a number of East Texas cattlemen began moving their herds to West Texas for more room. About twice a month, in those days, we'd see a herd on the move. Later on, in the '70's, we'd see a herd every day, if we happened to be along the trail. I want to tell one on Clabe Merchant, a cattleman who had been crowded up 'til he wanted to move for free grass.

“His herd was moving along to the West, and passing through Van Zandt county, when a couple of some farmer's milk cows got into the herd. The farmer went to town and got the sheriff, where he swore out a warrant charging Merchant with stealing his cattle. The sheriff went back with him and they caught up with the herd. After the farmer picked out his cows, Merchant went back to town with him and put up bond. When the trial came off, two men who looked just alike answered when Merchant's name was called. They were

dressed 9 just alike, talked alike, and looked alike. When the farmer was called to identify the man whom he claimed stole his cows, he couldn't do it, and the sheriff couldn't identify the man he had arrested. So the case was dismissed and both men went and got the bond money. That was one of the funniest things I ever heard of. Later, John told me that Clabe asked him to go through that with him. John and Clabe were twin brothers. I met John in the commission business at Abilene, Tex. or maybe it was San Angelo, I don't just remember which now. Anyway, Clabe stopped in Denton for several years, then moved to around Abilene, and ran a lot of cattle in New Mexico, too.

“While working for Young, I met Shanghai Pierce, a horse buster right. He rode a horse or two for Young, but not for money because he had his own place by now. I don't recall where it was, or anything. What I recall about him was what he said about busting horses before the war. He said he worked for Grimes, one of Texas's biggest ranchers before the war. Grimes owned niggers, and kept cautioning Shanghai to be careful and sure. Shanghai said the reason he had to bust them horses so good was because a nigger was worth a $1,000.00 and he was only worth $20.00 a month.

“I think it was along about this time that Foote brought sheep to the country. In those days, sheepmen and cattlemen had a lot of trouble when sheep showed; but since Young was already in it, Foote made the grade. When Foote first came to the country, he went to work for Young. He wasn't a rider, but he was handy around the sheep; and since he was pretty smart, Young made him a sort of a straw boss. Foote learned a lot about sheep this way, and he'd send his wages back East to his folks to buy up land [?] from the Union ex-soldiers in their neighborhood. After a few years, his folks staked him with 10 enough money to buy the old [Hobin?] Ranch, which he stocked with sheep, then took the scrip and bought more grazing land. Along in '79, a serious drouth came along, and he had to move to where he could get water. Young wasn't bothered, because he had plenty of waterholes on his place. Foote went to the head of Falls Creek, in Hamilton county. He'd only been there two or three days when the cattlemen hung five or six sheepmen up by their thumbs 'til they promised to get out with their herds. A couple of days later, five or

six cowpunchers showed up at his camp with a wagon and loaded his stuff on it, then had him tell his herders to move the sheep along with wagon. They moved him back about 15 miles, then left him alone.. I asked Foote several times what he and those cowpunchers talked about as they rode along, and he said: 'My gosh! I couldn't think of anything to talk about!'

“Along in the early '80's, I took a job trail driving for Buchanan and Beatty. I never did make many trail drives, and none as far north as this one. It lasted two months and we took the herd up into the Territory, (now Okla.) We had high water several places. You know, rivers used to stay up longer than they do now. Why, I've rowed a boat all over out past the bluffs in back of the courthouse here. I've rowed over every railroad, except the Santa Fe, and it was about a foot out of the water. Of course, that was later on, but I just wanted to give you an example.

“The herd was about 1,000 head of stock cattle, and we'd stop two or three days in a place, just drift along and let the cattle grow fat on the place. We'd drive them five or six miles in a day, then drift three or four miles 'til they bedded down at nightfall. When we got to Fort Griffin, there were already two herds there 11 before us. I can't recall the names of the owners, because in the 10 days we were there five or six more herds came up. This was in the days when a herd a day went up the trail, each one following the other, it appeared.

“Well, those herds began to stack up. That was bad enough; but for no reason a-tall, they'd run every night and mix up with other herds.. What a time we had! A stampede every night! By the time that water started to going down, there wasn't a man in camp that wasn't suspicioned of started a run; and that was grounds for gun trouble. Every man's gun hung loose in it's holster, ready for instant use. It seemed like we were all on tip-toes, and ready to kill. After the water went down for enough to ford, all the herds were mixed up into one herd. The way out was to pick a referee, to see that every man got his own cattle. Then the cowpunchers started driving and cutting. Every herd was on it's way in two days, and

possible murder was side-tracked. After we crossed the herd at Doan's Crossing, we got plum out of sight of any other herd.

“One of my friends who used to be a trail driver, and went up with a number of drives, was George Campbell. He had some tough experiences with those Kansas squatters. They had a law passed that, when a man's herd ruined his crop, two of his neighbors reforced it, set the amount the cattlemen had to pay, and if he didn't up it, the sheriff'd back the squatter's play. Well, during a rain, it's natural for a herd to get up and drift; and if it happened to drift on to a man's farm where there was something good to eat, it ate and trampled. That was alright. The rub was that any number of crops were paid for, time and time again. After a herd went over 12 a crop once, you couldn't tell when it had happened if the crop had been planted that year.

“That, and other tricks, we called 'prejudice'. On some trails, the Kansans would meet the herd at the border with guns, make the cowpunchers narrow the herd down, then charge them for crossing. The next thing they did was to set seasons of the year for Southern cattle to trail drive. I just thought it was because of the competition, but later on I found they had a real reason. They fixed the months between November and May for trail drives to pass through. This was known as 'Open Season', and was done in an effort to kill out what was known as 'Cattle Fever'. I don't just recall the year this fever was discovered as being caused by cattle ticks, but that was the real cause. Some Southern cattlemen'd buy up some blooded stock, ship 'em in, and mix 'em up with his stuff, and it wouldn't be no time 'til it'd all be dead from the fever. On the other hand, cattle that had been born in tick territory didn't seem to be bothered, because they were used to it. Then, the mineral in gyp water seemed to kill tick fairly well.

“These blooded cattle were pretty easy to stomp after they got a few ticks on 'em, too. Of course, you're likely to have a stampede any time you have a herd rounded up. Don't have to have many in a herd, either. Another thing, anything's liable to start 'em - wild animal, skunk, lightning, or anything. They're more likely to start after it had rained a little, because

a rain makes them get up and mill around. Any kind of an unusual noise starts 'em; and after they're/ started, it runs into work trying to stop them. Why, they're off faster than a bullet. Of course, that's not literally, because they can't run as 13 fast as a bullet goes, but they run at top speed on a moment's notice. I believe that everybody understands how a herd is stopped, so I'll just go into it just a little bit. All riders try to get to the front, where they try to make the leaders turn, then keep turning 'til the entire herd is milling. Those who can't reach the front, keep the middle and back of the herd from straggling, then when the herd's milling you have the whole bunch together 'til after one of them has bawled, then the herd's stopped in less than five minutes, because other critters take up the bawling.

“I recall one stomp in particular, because it was so much trouble, We'd just got the herd penned in corrals along the Brazos River, when a train came along. Them critters just tore that fence plum down, and run all night. What a time we had! It took us a week to round 'em up again. Another trouble after a stomp is that they're skittish and easier to start stomping again.

“We didn't have so many stomps on the Young ranch, because he didn't run to stock so heavy. The most sheep he had was along in the '90's and the 1900's, I reckon around 30,000 head of them. Then he ran around 1,200 horses and 1,000 cattle in the 'Upside Down 22' iron. That was the way you made the brand, upside down.

“About the sheep-herders. Why, they had to stay right with the sheep all the time. I remember Billy saying: 'Six days shalt thou labor, all except the sheep-herder'. The cowpokes had times off to go places, and they had a better life. Another thing, they were more friendly, and helped each other. Of course, it took real riders to work with the cow critters, but a fellow could get along without 14 having to ride like he did with the horse herd. Wasn't no foolin' around with the horses.

“The reason I brought this up was to show how they helped each other in those days. I was a real rider, as were several others, but from time to time men would come who

couldn't ride so well, and they were put with the cattle. No matter where he went, though, he had to ride a bronc, because them scoundrels we had in them days pitched every morning. We had to, what we called, 'warm 'em up'. That meant that we'd have to ride them every morning 'til they got a little tired from pitching, then they'd settled down to work and wouldn't pitch the rest of the day, unless something unusual happened. There was a rule, though, that you had to be man enough to ride the horse that was given you. If you didn't, you lose the job; and that's where I made a lot of friends for life, because I'd warm their horses up for them.

“I didn't mind riding those broncs so much, either, because I loved to ride horses all the time, and nothing gave me so much pleasure as bending a horse's will to mine. Then, I loved to teach them to cut cattle out of a herd, and the other tricks a cow horse should know. I always figured a horse that was broke right was as much of a tool, or more, than any builder's tools; and the better a tool a builder has, the better the work he's capable of doing. Of course, I had quite a bit of help in corralling the wild ones, and so on, but in one year I busted 178 wild horses. Another thing, not generally known nowadays, is that horses in my day were not rode 'til after they'd had their colt's teeth out, and they're not out 'til after they're five years old, or over. Around 30 of the 178 still had 15 their colt's teeth.

“Let's see, now. We haven't said anything about the first fences, have we? The first fence I ever saw, a barb wire fence, was at the old Four Mile Spring, right out of Gatesville, in Coryell. There were lots of fences put up, but I believe the first big one that wasn't cut down right after it was put up, was on the Reynolds Ranch. Old George Reynolds put it up, but he had quite a number of gaps, or gates, around it, and everybody was told that they could drive on or off at any time they got ready, that the fence was to keep the Reynold's cow critters from drifting so the roundups wouldn't be so hard.

“The last big herd to cross that range was the Goodnight herd, going North, and George and Goodnight had a big falling out about that. That was a serious thing in those days, fencing. When a politician announced for office, the first question he was asked was: 'You

a free grasser or a lease man?' If he was a free grasser, he didn't have much trouble in getting into his office.

“I once heard a speech at Hamilton about that, and the speaker said that the rawhiders held this country back 50 years by cutting them fences down. I went to him and told him that if it hadn't of been for the rawhiders running the Indians out, people still couldn't live here. He got right back on that platform and said he'd changed his mind about the rawhiders. That was the only thing to do, because it was right. You take fellows like old George Reynolds, and he helped clear the country of Indians. In one fight, he was struck in the stomach with an arrow and had to go 100 miles, to Weatherford, Tex., to get a doctor. While I don't know the details, you can find 16 that in history. I've read it several times myself, and I've heard several oldtimers tell it who were in Weatherford when he showed at the doc's. I believe that, in some way or other, he got the shaft of the arrow out, but the head stayed in him for about 14 years. Those old rawhiders were the kind of men it took to make this country livable.

“In my time, I've met any number of those old rawhiders. One of them was a fellow by the name of [Gowell?] Cleveland. I'm not too sure of that name, but if you want to get it down perfect you can look in the files of the Dallas News. This happened in the old days when men wore their guns handy all the time. Cleveland was a Matagorda Bay man who was in Dallas after a trail drive, and on his way back. He went to court, and there was a young man on trial for some little old something or other. Cleveland didn't like the way the trial was going, so he and his buddy held the court up, and took the fellow up into a sort of a cupola which was in the top of the building, because they couldn't get out. After they stayed up there for two days, the court bargained with them to come down and quit. I asked Gowell how come he done that, and he said: 'Well, the fellow was an orphan boy, and I saw they were going to hang him if somebody didn't step in. It just looked to me like the cards were stacked against him, and I never liked to see a crooked hand dealt, so it was just up to me'.

“Another rawhider was in the Spanish-American [fracas?] in Cuba. You know old Theodore Roosevelt got a lot of cowpunchers for his army? Well, this was one of them, and he was running a mule ambulance. These mules were pretty bad about cutting up, and on one detail they just pitched all over the place. It seems that they started pitching 17 just before he got to a small bridge over a dry creek bed where there were a lot of dead men. They were there because both armies had fought back and forth over this ditch, and the men'd fall in the ditch. He told me that he wouldn't have took a million dollars for them mules, because they pitched so hard they took his mind off all them bodies.

“There's a man in the Stock Yards who you ought to talk to. His name is Pony Starr. Oh, you've met him? Well, how did his eyes strike you? Didn't they strike you as being like two burnt holes in a blanket? There's quite a story back of Pony, about killings, and so on; and Buck Hunley, who works for Cassidy Commission in the exchange Building, says it's all true because he was in the Territory when it happened. The Starr family was a big family, and had several famous men in it, besides several outlaws. Pony doesn't claim kin to the outlaw Starr in the Territory days, but I believe he was kin.

“I was up in the Territory right after the outlaw was shot, and talked to the men who was supposed to have shot him. He was just a young fellow, by the name of Heck Thomas. Heck said he and another young fellow chased Starr for awhile, then the other fellow said: 'I believe I'll get him'. Then he stopped his horse, knelt down, took good aim with his rifle, then shot. Heck said that while Starr didn't fall, he started reeling in the saddle. He was out of rifle shot by then, so they started after him again. Pretty soon he fell off his horse and they stopped where he was, then waited 'til he died so that he couldn't get away, if he happened to be playing possum on them.

“There's a rawhider here in Fort Worth that I'd like for you to see. I don't know just where he lives, but his name's Lewis [Manning?]. 18 His father was the first sheriff of Coryell county. Lewis and the school teacher were in the school building alone one day, when the

Indians came. Lewis hid, and they killed the teacher. When they didn't find anybody else, they went off.

“I guess there's not much else to tell. But the wife, there - she and I were talking about olden times here the other day - and she said that we stayed on that ranch in Coryell county 40 years. Then I was out gallivanting around, she stayed right there. We kept one man all the time, but there was always from one to 30 around the place. That's the way times used to be. Whenever you saw a man coming into your yard, you didn't wait to find out whether he was a stranger or not; you told him to light, feed his horse, and come in at chuck time.

“The women in my time didn't do much riding around, except to church or to visit. Now, Sarah [McCutcheon?] she was the step-daughter of Billy Young- she was quite a rider. Many's the time I've seen her ride a cutting horse side-saddle. She'd work in the roundups, too, and I've seen the light between her and the saddle more than just a few times, too.

“Josie Young, Billy's daughter, was an older woman than Sarah, and could ride and rope just like any man-side-saddle, or course. It was indecent for a woman to ride a-straddle, then. I've seen Josie rope and bulldog many a 300 pound steer.

“Oh, yes. About the mule street car lines in Waco. I sold them some of their first mules. And after they'd been running for sometime, I took one of the ex-slave niggers down to Waco on a cattle drive. I sold beef to the Waco beef contractors down there for quite awhile. 19 Well, then he later saw the coke cars; then, on a later drive, seen the electric cars first came in, he went with me again. The first one he saw, he just shook his head for awhile. I asked him what the trouble was, and he said: 'Well, I've seen 'em hauled with mules, and I've seen 'em run with coke, but I never thought I'd ever see 'em run with fishing poles'. You know, that nigger was a good cowhand, and could ride and rope with the best of them.

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“There's one other thing I don't think I've mentioned, and that's the hide inspector. That was a political office sometime after the '80's, and acted sort of like the bank [clearning?] houses of today. We had to see the hide of every critter that was killed in the county, and notify the man who had the brand registered when the critter was killed, and who sold it. That way, the cattlemen kept up with their cattle; and when a trail drive came through and some of the cattle joined the drive, the man who sold the beef would send the other a check. Some of them just kept books and settled up once a year. That was alright 'til some fellow sold more cattle than he was able to pay for, then he was in a jack-pot. More than just one man was killed over it, too.

“Well, I've just about told you all I can recall now, except that an honest man had to be awful careful in the olden days. If he saw too much, and was known to be too honest, he was in danger of losing his life. I always followed the policy of not seeing a thing unless I was forced to, then I forgot. This has been the reason I've lived to the ripe old age I've lived without ever being shot, even once, when I've been through county wars, mobs, and so on. The main reason I don't talk now is because quite a number of those fellows 20 still live today, and are honest men with families. They just followed the custom in those days, and I don't see why I should make their families suffer for something they don't even dream could have happened once.

“There's one more thing I could have told you about, and that's the way people got around when we first came to Texas. All the wagons, or 9 out of 10 anyway, were pulled by oxen. I recall now how one man said he liked to see a team of oxen run away, because they took so long to get out of sight. You know, they didn't travel very fast. Horses were a big improvement over oxen in more ways than just being fast. An ox was so stubborn, and had to be watered when he got thirsty. If you didn't water them right then, or right away, they'd pull your whole load right into the water 'til they got deep enough to drink without bending over too far to reach it. They ruined several loads of flour for my father that way.